

evokes quiet internal voyages in search of lost childhoods. More darkly teasing imagery appears in smaller pieces, such as *Nest* (1988), with its mock-threatening oversized birds perched on carousel panthers. Whatever their meaning, such small-scale pieces have a haunting presence sometimes lost in the more ambitious ones. This broad-based show revealed Best's rich and diverse sources, but also his still-unfocused probing.

—Dorothy Burkhart

LOS ANGELES

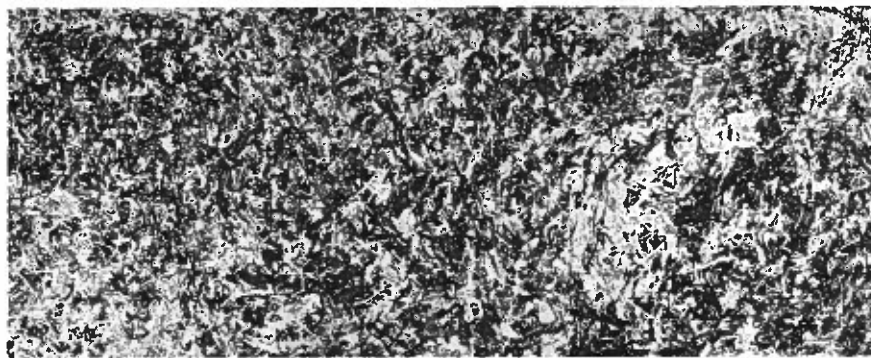
Michael Rubin

LOS ANGELES CONTEMPORARY ARTS

Jackson Pollock is probably the first name that pops into the viewer's mind during a show of Michael Rubin's paintings and prints—and for good reason. Rubin's densely impacted fields of drips, splashes, and swirling lines would be unthinkable without the seminal work of that pioneering Abstract Expressionist. The issue of indebtedness soon fades, however, as Rubin proves his ability to deliver fresh-looking work in this familiar territory.

In various formats, from the 6¼-foot-tall *White Line Body* to the 12-foot-wide diptych *Against the Dragon*, Rubin unifies vast expanses of space while orchestrating passages of intimate detail in acrylic on canvas. He also emerges as a deft colorist. Whether seen from a distance, as inflected fields of intense hues that invite contemplation, or up close, as multilayered pockets of discovery, Rubin's paintings are visually engrossing.

Their surfaces coalesce as fields of energy—quivering, throbbing, and occasionally plunging into caves of darkness. *Chinese Orange*, for example, is a closely keyed, richly textured hymn to color, while *Yellow Climber* inspires thoughts of mysterious landscapes as a yellow arch rises amid skeins of blue pigment.



Michael Rubin, *Yellow Climber*, 1991, acrylic on linen, 36 by 84 inches. Los Angeles Contemporary Arts.

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Patssi Valdez, *Brown Huevos*, 1992, acrylic on canvas, 30 by 30 inches. Daniel Saxon.

The same sensibility informs the etchings and lithographs, shown here for the first time, but Rubin lets more air into the prints and allows more contrast. Working with white space and watery paths of color as well as barbed, wiry line, he reveals a considerable repertoire of energetic expression.

—Suzanne Muchnic

Patssi Valdez

DANIEL SAXON

Patssi Valdez' chili-hot, topsy-turvy domestic visions capture the turmoil of a Latina assessing an East L.A. culture animated by dualities: family loyalty and violence, pride and self-doubt. It is also a culture steeped in the Roman Catholic sense of sin, repentance, and redemption.

As a member of the '70s collaborative foursome ASCO—meaning "nausea"—Valdez rejected stereotypical Mexican art and chose confrontational real-life issues—police brutality, female rights, gay rights—over renderings of the Virgin.

In this exhibition, Valdez faced the

demons of the home. Fringe-clothed tables appear as if jolted by seismic waves. Forks, knives, and umbrellas take on nasty little personae. Although Valdez refers to ethnic roots through her exuberant colors and accessories, she reaches beyond the confines of their Latino references to an all-inclusive human dimension. In *Brown Huevos*, Valdez zeroes in on fewer objects, fewer to be eaten up by a ravenous space, and dishes up a tight aerial view where the table and chairs cling to the sides of the picture. Two supplicant sunny-side-up eggs, white and vulnerable in a field of volatile red, pronounce an almost silent cry for help.

Increasingly Valdez' art is filtered through her grasp of art history: the riveting graphic depiction of Beckmann, the spatial distortion and articulation of Picasso, and the bizarre interrelationships of Man Ray. In these paintings Valdez is bent on working alienation and anguish into a far more seductive presence.

—Pamela Hammond

CHICAGO

Risa Sekiguchi

CULTURAL CENTER

In these almost miniature oil paintings on wood panels, Risa Sekiguchi conjures up dark, enigmatic visions that serve as metaphors for the human condition. With their simplified forms and minimum of detail, these spare, untitled works offer few clues to their meanings. Feelings of isolation, nostalgia, and loss, however, persist in the artist's stark yet sensuously painted still lifes and solitary nudes. Evoking meditative, at times mystical states of mind, her moody, atmospheric images owe much to Romantic and Symbolist traditions.

Sekiguchi's nudes are situated in nondescript interiors or stormy, twilight land- and seascapes worthy of Albert Pinkham Ryder. Their faces are invariably turned away from the viewer or draped with cloth, recalling Eakins' hooded academy models or Magritte's shrouded women. One veiled figure stands against a blank wall as if facing a firing squad. Another's head is submerged in impenetrable shadow below a crisp white sheet. Here intimacy is replaced by a victimization or sacrifice of the self that is rather like a crucifixion.

Sekiguchi's figures seem fated to accept the will of unseen forces over which they have no control. Her image of a limp body suspended from a tenuous lifeline between

heaven and earth comes to mind. Like most of the artist's work, it is ambiguous. Is the figure lifeless or merely exhausted? Is it being lowered down or lifted up? Nothing is clear. Here, as in her depiction of an empty dish placed on a closed book, there is an air of quiet resignation.

—Garrett Holg



Risa Sekiguchi, *Untitled*, 1991, oil on board, 11½ by 9½ inches. Chicago Cultural Center.

Evelyn Statsinger

JAN CICERO

Evelyn Statsinger's recent paintings peel back protective layers of nature's inner sanctum to reveal a lush and radiant place that is both familiar and strange. Marked by sudden and disorienting leaps in scale and depth, these works evoke a simultaneously macro- and microcosmic world where exotic seeds, pods, and other curiously shaped organisms frequently suggest similarities to internal human anatomy. Here roots become arteries and fleshy bulblike forms double for any number of vital organs.

The artist's canvases, which bear such titles as *Passages* and *Layerings*, are wonderlands of continual metamorphosis. Each is constructed from an underlying field of meticulous and varied patterns seamed together with sinuous tendrils. Resembling intricate chromosomal networks, these areas, with their dense clusters of dots, dashes, and squiggly lines, seem literally to crackle and murmur with the very essence of things in the process of growth and transformation. A sense of reverence and wonder permeates these images, yet there are disturb-

ing forces at work here too.

At times, unidentifiable objects with hard edges and sleek industrial surfaces intrude into this organic world, like probing garden tools or surgical instruments. In *Passages* part of one such implement projects into what appears to be a seed or maybe even a wound, adding a somewhat sinister aspect to the artist's vision. For the most part, however, these are life-affirming lessons that emit a warm, golden-yellow light. Statsinger is in top form with these works, her latest in a career spanning nearly four-and-a-half decades.

—G. H.

TOLEDO

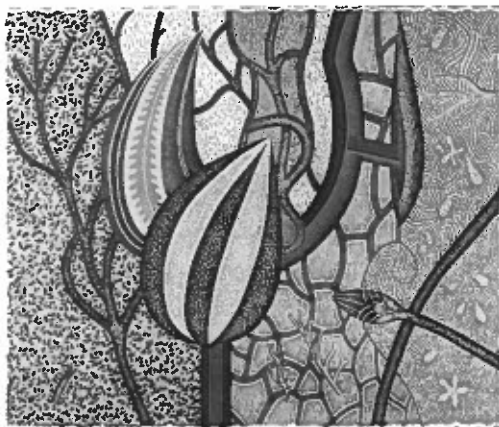
Hunt Slonem

IMAGES

Domestication of the wildest by the tamest has long fascinated Hunt Slonem, whose mystical view of the world focuses on birds, the winged archetypes of ultimate freedom. In an excellent world-touring exhibition of 24 recent works, the artist's tropical beauties become visual poetry, color, and texture transformed into lyrical rhythms and line.

The artist resides with birds, dozens of them, in a Bowery loft-aviary in New York. Roommates, tenants, feathery inspiration, Slonem's birds live far more luxuriously than the uncaged pigeons sitting on windowsills. Yet they remain perched, in profile, watchful, always with an eye toward the viewer.

The richness and variety of Slonem's work speaks eloquently to the eye. The artist's palette ranges from subtle mixed hues of peach, rose, and acid green to more forthright blues, violets, and grays, stretching into riotous neon pink and red, and a



Evelyn Statsinger, *Passages*, 1990, oil on canvas, 35¼ by 41¼ inches. Jan Cicero.



Hunt Slonem, *Picul*, 1991, oil on canvas, 96 by 66 inches. Images.

green big as all outdoors.

Palette choice relates to grid presence: the ethereal "Picul" series relies on softer shades that float through crosshatched cages carved into thick wet oil paint with a brush handle. Often foglike backgrounds balance the staccato beat of repeated bird forms.

Slonem's birds cluster in surface compositions marked by bold color and undulating line. Most notable is *Channel Bill Toucans*, with a syncopated play of beaks, eyes, and orange circles that's nearly hypnotic. Slonem's paintings, as quiet and soothing as they obviously are, nevertheless sing brilliantly to the heart and soul.

—Sally Vallongo

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Willem de Looper

JONES TROYER FITZPATRICK

Abstraction is alive and well in the city that 30 years ago generated a Color School. Chief among the seasoned practitioners is Dutch-born Willem de Looper, who observed that school's passion for flatness and geometry yet stayed with texture, layering, and volume. Now, de Looper's newest paintings appear to jettison some of the rules—of scale and composition—he has played by for three decades.

Along with his familiar midsize canvases, he showed pages from "illuminated books,"